

Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your LFPP award objectives. As stated in the LFPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future LFPP or Farmers Market Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by LFPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to LFPP staff to avoid delays:

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-720-0300

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact LFPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: (e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)	December 15, 2014 – December 15, 2015
Authorized Representative Name:	Tyrie Smith
Authorized Representative Phone:	706-782-0780
Authorized Representative Email:	foodhub@foodbanknega.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Food Bank of Northeast Georgia
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Whole Community Food Network
Grant Agreement Number: (e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)	14-LFPPX-GA-0043
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Clayton, GA
Total Awarded Budget:	\$25,000

LFPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

☒ Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).

☐ Different individual: Name: _____; Email: _____; Phone: _____

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1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by LFPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative and have been approved by LFPP staff, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional goals/objectives if necessary. For each item below, qualitatively discuss the progress made toward each one and indicate the impact on the community, if any.

- i. Goal/Objective 1: Create Food Hub Business Plan (Five Parts)

- a. Identify key farmer partners in hub activities – fruit and vegetable-producing farms in the immediate area are sparse, which led to our expanding our reach into North Carolina and South Carolina. To-date, we have 25 local/regional farms with whom we are working directly. We have shifted our immediate work with these farms to assisting them in ramping up or developing market-specific farm plans in order to improve their abilities to work with the food hub as we get our packing and processing lines up and running. As many of the farmers in our area use organic growing practices (and many will be seeking USDA organic certification), we are pursuing USDA organic handler/processor certification. Attached is a list of these farms.

- b. Develop aggregate market opportunities – Over the past year, we have built a coalition of interested buyers, including institutional, retail, and restaurant markets. As there have been no products produced to-date, no contracts have been created between the food hub and these markets. Once we have established a concrete, consistent product list, we will move forward with contracting. Larger markets include:

1. Habersham County Schools
2. Rabun County Schools
3. White County Schools
4. Whole Foods Market

- c. Identify core hub services – produce pick-up, sorting and grading, cleaning, sanitizing, and packaging for fresh distribution, processing and packaging for frozen distribution, marketing and sales for individual farms, co-op sales under independent and/or food hub labels, fresh and frozen storage, onsite farmer’s market, farm planning services, small farm business planning, food safety training, assistance with safety and grading certifications

- d. Create a staged plan for hub operations and ramp-up – with the above in mind, a broad staged plan for hub operations looks something like this:

1. Years 1-3:
 - a. contracted processing for partnering hubs/aggregators
 - b. creating value-added fresh and frozen products from procured USDA #2 produce

- c. working with local farms on developing improved, market-focused farm planning
- d. developing value-added product development and business incubation programs

2. Years 3-5:

- a. Begin to phase out contracted processing for partnering hubs/aggregators
- b. Continue creating value-added fresh and frozen products from procured USDA #2 with an increase in locally-procured produce
- c. Begin processing locally-sourced products for individual farms and/or co-op members
- d. Incubate 5-10 value-added product businesses

e. Create hub financial projections – See attached three-year pro forma.

ii. Impact on Community:

Through our communications with various community stakeholders – farmers, market representatives, and media outlets – the community at-large has learned a great deal about the food hub facility and its mission. Likewise, we have been able to create a dialogue with a network of hubs that has led to collaborations and partnerships, aiding in our overall success. Our focus on the school nutrition market has made great headway to improving the health of children in the target communities. On the other side of the coin, increasing varied market opportunities for farmers promises to improve farm sustainability and economic development for the area. As we better understand the hub's capabilities in relation to specific need, our communications pieces have improved and now provide clearer direction going forward, which translates to better service to all community stakeholders.

2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, since the baseline date (the start date of the award performance period—September 30, 2014). Include further explanation if necessary.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: 1
- ii. Number of jobs retained: 1
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 40
- iv. Number of markets expanded: Not Applicable
- v. Number of new markets established: Not Applicable
- vi. Market sales increased by \$Not Applicable and increased by Not Applicable%.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 20
 - a. Percent Increase: 2000%

3. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.? If so, how? Not Applicable

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners?
University of Georgia Cooperative Extension
Georgia Organics
Habersham County Schools
 - ii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant? UGA Cooperative Extension will continue to be invaluable as a liaison between farmers and the hub as they have assisted us tremendously in organizing farmer meetings. Furthermore, they are our key partner in developing services for farmers, including small farm business planning and food Safety Training. Georgia Organics has phased out as our Farm to School program administrator. They will, however, through their Georgia Food Oasis program continue to play a key role in facilitating discussions with school nutritionists and school district leaders, specifically in Habersham County. Habersham County Schools has served as our pilot Farm to School program for the last three years. HCS nutrition director Andrea Thomas has been an incredible asset to our learning about school food procurement and how to best help improve overall school nutrition through local food aggregation. The district as a whole remains committed to Farm to School and will continue to be a significant partner, especially as we continue to develop our local food procurement for schools through the food hub.
5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project? No contractors were utilized in programmatic pieces.
6. Have you publicized any results yet?
 - i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? Publicizing overall progress of the facility through local media.
 - ii. To whom did you publicize the results? The local community, at-large.
 - iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? ~7,500

*Send any publicity information (brochures, announcements, newsletters, etc.) electronically along with this report. Non-electronic promotional items should be digitally photographed and emailed with this report (do not send the actual item).
7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work? Yes
 - i. If so, how did you collect the information? We established a working advisory board that consists of local and regional community leaders, project investors, and community partners.
 - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)? See below:

Member 1: Bring in more county support. Clubs, civic organizations, etc... to utilize the space in the teaching kitchen for word of mouth advertising to local community. I'm happy to say she has found the first interest. Community Partnership of Rabun. We have to work out the details but this is promising.

Member 2: We need to have more information available to the community. We need to give date, utilize the knowledge and expertise(sphere of influence) of our council members.

Member 3: We need to secure an overall plan and vision for the Mountain Branch of the Food Bank.

Member 3- Would like to see Intel and Influence what is going on with the great project. He sees this as a wonderful asset for the Region as a whole. He got started volunteering at the Food Bank in Augusta, GA.

Member 4: His focus was marketing and advertising. He was extremely passionate about a comprehensive plan for advertising not only the Grand Opening of the Mountain Branch, but the Capital Campaign as a whole. Athens/Clayton need \$ to operate and continue to grow. In order to make this happen we need a marketing plan that will reach the majority of the population of our 14 counties.

Member 5: would like to see Rabun county residents get engaged and take ownership of this state of the art Facility in their backyard. GA is assisting with Facilities Maintenance and getting the exterior completed and ready to Grand Open. He is open to ideas and suggestions or help.

Member 6: John stressed the importance of the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia and the 14 counties we serve. Our capital campaign and grand opening needs to include everyone in our Region. We are the "Food Bank" of this Region.

Member 7: Katie filled us in on the Healthy Meal for Kids, and the classes that she helped orchestrate. Very Cool! This is type of advertising we need to get out to the general public. We need to streamline this communication to each county and its residents.

Member 8: Advertise, Advertise, Advertise, what we are doing at the Food Bank. We served and fed (XXXX) families last week, last month, last year. Get participation through radio, newspaper, mailing, etc.....

Member 9: Educate the county. We had a great lunch with [local chef] and were able to tap his knowledge of the local restaurant scene. How can we implement their expertise and entrepreneurship, into our teaching kitchen. On a side note, his meatloaf is the best I have ever tasted. It was a taste bud explosion.

Member 10: Hopes to continue to be a advocate of the Food Bank. There is a wealth of talent and resources in the community that we have not tapped into.

Member 11: Don't lose focus on feeding the hungry. We need to continue to teach people how to cook and eat healthy.

Member 12: He wants to be of service and help the Food Bank in whatever facet. He currently farms but has previous knowledge in marketing.

Member 13: It is my vision to see each member of this council, our Board, associates, and agencies engaged! Engagement can change the game, and through managing positive energy we can show a powerful force that can end hunger.

8. Budget Summary:

- i. As part of the LFPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report: ☒
- ii. Did the project generate any income? No

a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?

9. Lessons Learned:

- i. Summarize any lessons learned. They should draw on positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).

The best lesson has been that farmers will tell you what they need. Over the course of this year, we have developed good relationships with several farmers in our service area, which has helped us greatly in developing our scope of services to best meet farmer needs. This refers to both our packing and processing services and our programmatic offerings in areas such as farm planning and farm food safety training.

A tough lesson we learned was in regard to our expectations for the number of farms producing fruits and vegetables in the area. At best, our early numbers were ambitious. As it turns out, there is but a fraction of what we initially thought. Those that are here are largely micro hobby farms. This past year has been focused largely on resituating out approach to just find farmers interested in processing and then working with those farms on how to professionalize, especially in regard to farm food safety.

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving: Not Applicable
- iii. Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project:

The most valuable lesson would be to build a strong coalition of farmers with whom to develop a hub. Allow the farmers to layout explicit needs pertaining to hub services they may require. Once that coalition is solidified, begin speaking with market representatives to fill out a plan in which market needs can be applied to farm planning, creating a synergy between producers and markets. That is how to develop a firm foundation for any food hub project.

10. Future Work:

- i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond the performance period? In other words, how will you parlay the results of your project's work to benefit future community goals and initiatives? Include information about community impact and outreach, anticipated increases in markets and/or sales, estimated number of jobs retained/created, and any other information you'd like to share about the future of your project.

Thanks to the work of this project, we are now in a position to begin the pragmatic work of the food hub. Packing, processing, and distribution is slated to begin June 2016. This means that we will see the creation of some 12 new jobs at the facility, the first of which is our facility director, who has been hired and begins on April 4, 2016. The creation of 12 jobs alone has a significant impact on this community, which has seen a dramatic decline in skilled labor jobs over the past 15 years.

The project has also helped tremendously with gaining a better understanding of where farmers are in relation to production, market sales, and farm food safety. This information has allowed us to work with farmers over the course of the past year to improve their capabilities for a variety of markets – from institutional to retail to

restaurants. That said, we are in a better place to move forward with the services necessary to move local food to local consumers. In our three-year pro forma, we have established a progressive outlay to this end that is more realistic than our original projections. This will greatly improve access to local foods in our region and, in turn, better the overall food health of Northeast Georgia.

Finally, we it is our goal to market our successes with this project to bolster our capital campaign enough to complete our fourth phase, which will be the installation of a certified commercial kitchen. The purpose of this kitchen will be to provide entrepreneurial opportunities to the local population, serving as a business incubator for those wanting to explore value-added food businesses. Such businesses have the potential to improve the financial stability of the region.

- ii. Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals? Please refer to the attached Business Plan.